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POLITICO Playbook PM: Halftime

By JAKE SHERMAN, ANNA PALMER, GARRETT ROSS and ELI OKUN | 11/03/2020 01:24 PM EST

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jake Sherman is a senior writer for POLITICO and co-author of [POLITICO's Playbook](#), the nation's leading political newsletter. He is also the co-author of New York Times and national best seller, "The Hill to Die On: The Battle for Congress and the Future of Trump's America," which was published by Crown in 2019. Jake is an NBC and MSNBC political contributor.

Since 2009, Jake has chronicled all of the major legislative battles on Capitol Hill, and has also traveled the country to cover the battle for control of Congress.

Jake is a Connecticut native, and a graduate of The George Washington University — where he edited The GW Hatchet — and Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism. Jake lives in Washington with his wife Irene, son and daughter, and listens to an unhealthy amount



Caution tape closes off a voting stall to help distance voters to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus during Election Day at the East End School in Portland, Maine, on Tuesday, Nov. 3. | Robert F. Bukaty/AP Photo

HAPPY ELECTION DAY.

MORE THAN 100 MILLION AMERICANS voted before Election Day. **MORNING CONSULT** is conducting what they describe as the largest exit poll ever. [Check it out here](#)

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WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ... JOE BIDEN reiterated in an interview in Philadelphia that he would consider the recommendations of a bipartisan commission to study Supreme Court reforms, but is not a fan of adding seats.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP said at the Trump campaign headquarters about Election Day: "I think you're going to see some tremendous results."

-- **TRUMP** answering press questions: "I feel very good. After doing that many rallies the voice gets a little bit choppy I think."

-- **ON COVID:** "I say it and I say it proudly: we are rounding the corner."

-- **TRUMP:** "Winning is easy. Losing is never easy. Not for me it's not."

OVERALL, there seem to have been relatively few breakdowns this morning, and voting in most places is proceeding pretty smoothly. **NBC'S SAHIL KAPUR:** "Biden legal adviser Bob Bauer: 'We're feeling, at this point, very good about the way the election is running.' He says the campaign feels 'very comfortable' as 'meritless' GOP lawsuits to invalidate votes are failing."

HERE'S WHAT THE IMPORTANT STATES LOOK LIKE TODAY ...

-- **FLORIDA**, via **MARC CAPUTO** in Miami: Florida Republicans started Election Day strong, taking about two hours to wipe out the Democrats' lead in raw early ballots cast -- of 115,000, an advantage of 1.3 percentage points (Democrats had a lead of 1.4 points heading into Election Day in 2016 when Trump won overall by 1.2 points). A record 9.1 million Floridians already voted before Election Day -- 63% voter turnout.

THE BIG QUESTIONS: How high will turnout get (it was 75% in 2016) and how will independents break? Indys are about a quarter of the electorate and they're siding with **JOE BIDEN** in nearly every poll, but his margin matters. Trump won independents by 4 points in 2016 exit polls.

REPUBLICANS ARE PROJECTING MORE CONFIDENCE because, well, that's what they do and they've won three statewide top-of-the-ticket races in a row, the last two when they looked like underdogs. The Democratic data people who know what they're talking about are guardedly optimistic, however, pointing to models showing **BIDEN** with as much as a 400,000-plus lead in actual early votes before Election Day. Assuming the model is right, that's a big deficit for Trump to make up -- but it's doable if Republicans crash the polls, Democrats stay home and independents don't break for Biden in a meaningful way.

AS OF AROUND NOON, there were around 1.1 million votes cast on Election Day, with Republicans accounting for nearly half of the ballots and Democrats and independents splitting the rest. If that pace holds, Trump is favored to win the state.

-- **ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION:** "[Georgia voters rush to the polls but some held up by tech glitches](#)" ... **GREG BLUESTEIN:** "[Election Day arrives: 5 factors that will decide Georgia's 2020 race](#)": "Just how blue will Atlanta's suburbs go? ... Will Republicans resurrect the 'beautiful red wall' in Georgia? ... Will Democrats hit 30-30? ... How will the fight over ballot access affect the vote? ... How will the pandemic reshape Georgia's electorate?" ... **WAIT TIMES** in Georgia seem to be staying very low. (Remember all those delays in the primary?)

... edited The GW Hatchet -- and Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism. Jake lives in Washington with his wife Irene, son and daughter, and listens to an unhealthy amount of Grateful Dead and Phish.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Anna Palmer is a senior Washington correspondent for POLITICO and co-author of POLITICO's Playbook, the most indispensable morning

newsletter for the biggest influencers in politics. Anna covers the world of Congress and politics, and has successfully chronicled the business of Washington insiders for years. Her stories take readers behind the scenes for the biggest fights in Washington as well as the 2016 election.

She is also the co-author of New York Times and national best seller, "The Hill to Die On: The Battle for Congress and the Future of Trump's America," which was published by Crown in 2019.

In addition to Playbook, Anna is also editorial director of Women Rule, a POLITICO platform that is dedicated to expanding leadership opportunities for women at all stages of their career.

Prior to becoming POLITICO's senior Washington correspondent, she was the co-author of the daily newsletter, POLITICO Influence, considered a must-read on K Street. Anna previously covered House leadership and lobbying as a staff writer for Roll Call. She got her start in Washington journalism as a lobbying business reporter for the industry newsletter Influence. She has also worked at Legal Times, where she covered the intersection of money and politics for the legal and lobbying industry, first as a staff writer and then as an editor.

A native of North Dakota, Anna is a graduate of St. Olaf College, where she was executive editor of the weekly campus newspaper, the Manitou Messenger. She lives in Washington, D.C.

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Georgia's election results? ... Will Democrats hit 30-30? ... How will the fight over ballot access affect the vote? ... How will the pandemic reshape Georgia's electorate?" ... **WAIT TIMES** in Georgia seem to be staying very low. (Remember all those delays in the primary?)

-- **TEXAS TRIBUNE: "Five things to watch on Election Day 2020 in Texas,"** by Alex Samuels and Patrick Svitek: "Can Joe Biden actually win Texas? ... Will the Texas House flip? ... How many U.S. House seats will Democrats pick up? ... Can John Cornyn dispatch a late Democratic spending blitz? ... How high can Texas turnout get — and when will all the votes be counted?"

-- **PHILLY INQUIRER: "These Pa. counties won't start counting mail ballots until Wednesday, possibly skewing early results"** ... **NBC'S BRANDY ZADROZNY: "Conservative media influencers get early start pushing misleading claims about Pennsylvania election":** "Pennsylvania voters have been hit especially hard by online voter fraud misinformation, according to media intelligence platform Signal Labs ... The Philadelphia District Attorney's office debunked a separate tweet from Trump's director of election day operations, Mike Roman."

NBC'S @PeterAlexander: "NEW: Early concern inside Trumpworld about Election Day turnout activities in PA: A person with direct knowledge of the campaign's operations tells me, 'The team in Pennsylvania was not as prepared as it should be in a state that could decide the presidency.'"

-- **AROUND THE COUNTRY: "Suspicious robocall campaign warning people to 'stay home' spooks voters nationwide,"** by WaPo's Tony Romm and Isaac Stanley-Becker: "The barrage of calls all feature the same short, recorded message: A computerized female voice says the message is a 'test call' before twice encouraging people to remain inside. The robocalls, which have come from a slew of fake or unknown numbers, began over the summer and intensified in October, and now appear to have affected nearly every Zip code in the United States. ...

"On Tuesday morning, Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel warned local voters about a suspicious text message making the rounds that sought to sow confusion about the voting process. The text said a 'typographical error' meant that people who are 'intending on voting for Joe Biden' instead had to select President Trump, and vice versa. The text, which Nessel's office shared with The Washington Post, attributed the information to the 'Federal Berue [sic] of Investigation.' ... A senior official at the Department of Homeland Security said Tuesday that the FBI is investigating the robocalls." **WaPo**

A message from the American Beverage Association:
At America's beverage companies our plastic bottles are made to be remade.
We're carefully designing them to be 100% recyclable, including the caps—so
every bottle can become a new one. That means less plastic waste in our
environment. Please help us get Every Bottle Back. EveryBottleBack.org

BUZZFEED'S @ZoeTillman: "New: Republicans in PA have filed suit against Montgomery Cty election officials, alleging they illegally pre-canvassed mail-in ballots before today and are giving voters a chance to fix deficient ballots." **The complaint**

DAVE WASSERMAN of the Cook Political Report and NBC News: "Some advice as the returns come in: if the initial results look skewed to you, that's because they will be. The unprecedented partisan polarization of mail/early votes and Election Day ballots is likely to lead to a 'blue mirage' in the Sun Belt and a 'red mirage' in the North, and my final pre-election story for NBC News takes a look at this phenomenon. Be cautious and be patient." **Dave's NBC story**

WHAT TO WATCH ... CHARLIE MAHTESIAN: "21 battlegrounds that will seal Trump's fate"

Messenger. She lives in Washington, D.C.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Garrett Ross is a Playbook producer and Playbook PM co-author.

Before joining POLITICO in 2017, he interned on The New York Times' copy desk and reported for The Associated Press on the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.

Despite calling Indiana, Kentucky and Maryland home, he graduated from Penn State University, where he studied print and digital journalism and served as editor-in-chief of The Daily Collegian.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Eli Okun is a Playbook producer and Playbook PM co-author.

Before joining POLITICO in 2017, he worked as a reporter for the New Hampshire Union Leader, covering local news and the 2016 election. He has also written for The Texas Tribune, Providence Business News and GlobalPost.

A Maryland native, he graduated from Brown University, where he studied international relations and was editor-in-chief of The Brown Daily Herald.

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TRUMP CAMPAIGN'S WORD OF THE DAY ... LANDSLIDE.

-- **W.H. PRESS SECRETARY** and sometime **TRUMP** campaign aide **KAYLEIGH MCENANY** had this prediction: "Under every circumstance our campaign believes that tonight will be a landslide. You have the Trafalgar poll -- the only poll to show President Trump leading in Michigan in 2016 -- saying he will win by 3 points. They have him up 2 points in Pennsylvania. We believe this will be a landslide."

-- ["Lara Trump predicts 'landslide' victory in rejection of election polling,"](#) by Nick Niedzwiedek: "Lara Trump, a senior adviser to Trump's reelection campaign and the president's daughter-in-law, said Tuesday that they believe the president will decisively beat Democratic nominee Joe Biden without the need for a protracted ballot count. 'People have not been talking to pollsters, and we think it's going to be a landslide victory and we aren't even going to need to take this into further days,' Lara Trump said on Fox News."

-- **FACT CHECK:** The people in the campaign don't actually believe this.

SIREN -- NBC'S @GeoffRBennett: "The U.S. Postal Service today reported its fifth consecutive day of fewer on-time ballot deliveries. #USPS says its processing score fell from roughly 91 percent to a new low yesterday (11/2) of 89.59 percent. Before the pandemic and DeJoy, on-time delivery rates were around 95%."

BIDEN in Scranton, via **ALEXI MCCAMMOND** of Axios: "'It's good to be home,' Biden said. After telling folks he unanimously won Dixville Notch, New Hampshire -- the first town in the US to count its votes -- he joked: 'Based on Trump's notion, I'm going to declare victory tonight.'" [Biden signing the wall of the house he grew up in ... What he wrote](#)

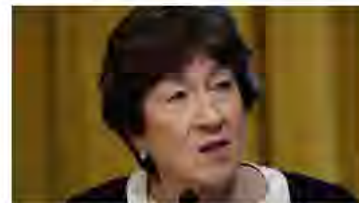
WHERE WE'RE AT ... AXIOS' JONATHAN SWAN: "Generals privately brief news anchors, promise no military role in election": "Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley ... set up Saturday's highly unusual call to make clear that the military's role is apolitical, one of the sources said -- and to dispel any notion of a role for the military in adjudicating a disputed election or making any decision around removing a president from the White House.

"Milley told the anchors that the U.S. military would have no role whatsoever in a peaceful transfer of power, one source added. One official told the anchors not to be alarmed if they see images of uniformed National Guard on Election Day; currently, they are not federalized but serving at the request of governors." [Axios](#)

TRACK FIRST 100 DAYS OF THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION: The Biden administration hit the ground running with a series of executive orders his first week in office and continues to outline priorities on key issues. What's coming down the pike? Find out in Transition Playbook, our scoop-filled newsletter tracking the policies, people and emerging power centers of the first

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VOTING IN A PANDEMIC -- “CDC says people who test positive for the virus can still vote in person,” by WaPo's Antonia Noori Farzan, Karla Adam, Lateshia Beachum and Isabelle Khurshudyan: “In newly updated guidance published Sunday, the agency said that voters who have tested positive or may have been exposed to the coronavirus should follow the standard advice to wear a mask, stay at least six feet away from others, and sanitize their hands before and after voting. ‘You should also let poll workers know that you are sick or in quarantine when you arrive at the polling location,’ the CDC’s website states.

“For tens of thousands of Americans, that may be the only option: People who received their test results in the past few days missed the cutoff to request an absentee ballot in most states, and getting an exemption typically requires surmounting arduous logistical hurdles, as The Post previously reported. But the prospect of casting a ballot alongside someone who is sick is unlikely to defuse the tension surrounding mask-wearing at polling places — something that remains optional in multiple states.”

WaPo ... [The guidance](#)

DEEP DIVE ... POLITICO MAGAZINE: “How Election Tech Could Create a Recount Nightmare,” by Isabella Farr and Olivia Reingold: “[I]n instances where the vote tally itself is in question, analysts could need access to voting machines’ underlying code to determine if potential security flaws, errors or even purposeful tampering are behind the irregularities. And this year, with widespread fears of contested ballots, recounts and the potential for weeks of legal challenges that threaten to undermine public faith in the results, those IP laws could prove decisive. ...

“Three major companies — Election Systems & Software, Dominion Voting Systems and Hart InterCivic — together control about 90 percent of the U.S. market for voting systems, according to election security advocates and researchers consulted by POLITICO. Industry-wide, it is standard practice for those companies to tightly control who has access to their proprietary software — not only to help those companies maintain an edge over their competitors, but to prevent the fraud or hacking of elections equipment. That means that the relevant source code used to design ballots and tabulate votes is copyrighted and private.”

KEEP UP WITH CONGRESS IN 2021: Get the inside scoop on the Schumer/McConnell dynamic, the debate over the filibuster and increasing tensions in the House. From Schumer to McConnell, Pelosi to McCarthy and everyone in between, new Huddle author Olivia Beavers brings the latest from Capitol Hill with assists from POLITICO's deeply sourced Congress team. [Subscribe to Huddle, the indispensable guide to Congress.](#)

REUTERS: “Tired of Trump, Deutsche Bank games ways to sever ties with the president - sources,” by Matt Scuffham, Tom Sims and John O'Donnell with a Frankfurt/New York dateline: “Deutsche Bank has about \$340 million in loans outstanding to the Trump Organization, the president’s umbrella group that is currently overseen by his two sons, according to filings made by Trump to the U.S. Office of Government Ethics in July and a senior source within the bank. The three loans, which are against Trump properties and start coming due in two years, are current on payments and personally

“Deutsche Bank has about \$340 million in loans outstanding to the Trump Organization, the president’s umbrella group that is currently overseen by his two sons, according to filings made by Trump to the U.S. Office of Government Ethics in July and a senior source within the bank. The three loans, which are against Trump properties and start coming due in two years, are current on payments and personally guaranteed by the president, according to two bank officials.

“In meetings in recent months, a Deutsche Bank management committee that oversees reputational and other risks for the lender in the Americas region has discussed ways in which it could rid the bank of these last vestiges of the relationship, two of the three bank officials said. The bank has over the years lent Trump more than \$2 billion, one of the officials said. One idea that has come up in the meetings: sell the loans in the secondary market, two of the bank officials said. But one of the officials said that idea has not gained traction, in part because it is not clear who would want to buy the loans and the attendant problems that come with it.” [Reuters](#)

THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION -- “LGBT advocacy groups sue over Trump diversity training order,” by Rebecca Rainey: “LGBT advocacy groups have filed a lawsuit seeking to invalidate President Donald Trump’s September executive order banning the government from working with contractors that conduct ‘any form of race or sex stereotyping,’ including diversity training.

“The groups receive federal grants and contracts to provide multiple services and health care to LGBT individuals. Their lawsuit, filed Monday in a California federal court, contends that the order limits them from using ‘scientific and medical-based information regarding systemic race or sex disparities in the provision of medical treatment’ when training their staff.” [POLITICO](#)

IMMIGRATION FILES -- “Migrant Families Were Confused When U.S. Expelled Children Into Mexico,” by NYT’s Caitlin Dickerson: “Since The New York Times reported last week on an internal email that warned border authorities about the improper transfers, [Eva] Acuña, who asked that her sister be identified by her first name to avoid immigration repercussions, is one of several Central Americans who have come forward saying they were anxious and confused after their children and young relatives were sent without any adult to accompany them into a country that is not their own.

“In some cases, including Esther’s, there were no other family members in Mexico to aid the children. ... It is unclear how many non-Mexican children have been expelled into Mexico, because both the American and Mexican governments have declined to provide data on the number of cases. U.S. government officials have cited a legal challenge against some of the expulsions that have occurred under the pandemic to explain why they cannot elaborate further.” [NYT](#)

MEDIAWATCH -- “What happens to CNN and MSNBC if Biden wins? It’s complicated,” by WaPo’s Jeremy Barr

-- **Hannah Allam** will join WaPo’s national security team to cover domestic terrorism. She most recently has been an NPR reporter covering extremism. [Announcement](#)

ENGAGED -- Daniel Bucheli, comms director for Rep. Ross Spano (R-Fla.) and a Trump White House and campaign alum, and **Julianna Gabisch**, who works for the city of Annapolis, got engaged this morning at the Lincoln Memorial. [Pic ... Another pic](#)

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